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1970/05/11



Department of State

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TELEGRAM

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 612
BT
T O P S E C R E T SAIGON 7236

Control: 2251Q

Recd : 11 May 70
8:41 a.m.

NODIS/KHMER

REF: STATE 070839

1. PRESIDENT THIEU AND GENERAL VIEN WERE IN TAY NINH THIS MORNING AND THIEU WAS TIED UP WITH CHIANG CHING KUO THIS AFTERNOON. GENERAL ABRAMS SAW VIEN AT 1500 AND THIEU ASKED ME BRING GENERAL ABRAMS FOR MEETING AT 1700 HOURS. WE CONVEYED MESSAGE IN REFTEL.
2. THIEU SAID HE HAD TOLD PRESS TODAY THAT OPERATIONS SOUTH OF FERRY WERE TO DESTROY VC BASES, THAT HE HAS NO INTENTION OF SENDING TROOPS TO PHNOM PENH OR DEEP INTO CAMBODIAN TERRITORY, AND THAT THE FLOTILLA TO PHNOM PENH IS TO REPATRIATE VIETNAMESE, NOT TO CONDUCT MILITARY OPERATIONS IN PHNOM PENH.
3. THIEU THEN SAID CAMBODIAN GOVT HAD ASKED GVN TO LIBERATE TAKEO. HE THOUGHT TAKEO WAS TOO FAR, AND AS ALTERNATE WAS HAVING JGS STUDY PROPOSAL TO SEND VN TROOPS NORTH FROM FERRY TO LINK UP WITH KHMER KROM TROOPS SENT FROM PHNOM PENH ABOUT 12 TO 15 KILOMETERS FROM PHNOM PENH. THIS WOULD RELEASE FANK TROOPS GUARDING RIVER TO GO TO SUPPORT OF TROOPS IN TAKEO AREA. KK AND VN TROOPS WOULD ALSO HELP COVER FLOTILLA ON MEKONG. I ASKED HIM NOT RPT NOT TO AUTHORIZE THIS UNTIL WE HAD REPORTED THIS PLAN AND HAD REPLY. HE AGREED, BUT ASKED FOR URGENT RESPONSE. HE SAID NO TRUTH TO RUMORS THAT FLOTILLA PLANNING MOVE TO KOMPONG CHAM.
4. THIEU THEN SAID SITUATION IN CAMBODIA DEVELOPING CRITICALLY. COMMUNISTS HAD TAKEN KRATIE, WERE MOVING ON KOMPONG CHAM, WHICH HE EXPECTED TO FALL IN A DAY OR TWO. IF KOMPONG CHAM, NEAK LUNG, AND TAKEO ALL COME UNDER VC CONTROL, PHNOM PENH, WHICH VIRTUALLY WITHOUT DEFENSE, WOULD COLLAPSE. PHNOM PENH ALREADY SENDING MESSAGES TO GVN TO HELP EXTRACT TROOPS FROM NEAR MONDULKIRI, AND FOR TROOPS TO BE SENT TO JOIN FANK FORCES WHO HAVE EVACUATED TO WEST SIDE OF RIVER AT KRATIE OR TO HELP EXTRACT THEM. HE EXPECTED SIMILAR REQUEST FOR HELP IN KAMPONG CHAM AREA.

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5. THIEU SAID UNLESS SOME ACTION TAKEN SOON TO BOLSTER CAMBODIAN GOVT "POLITICALLY AND PSYCHOLOGICALLY" HE THINKS GOVT IN PHNOM PENH WILL COLLAPSE. HE SAID HE WOULD BE PREPARED TO DO SOMETHING WITH VIETNAMESE TROOPS AT KAMPONG CHAM AND IN TAKEO AREA, BUT IT WOULD REQUIRE COMOUFLAGED US LOGISTIC AND AIR SUPPORT.

6. GENERAL ABRAMS, WHO IS REPORTING SEPARATELY ON THE MILITARY ASPECTS OF THESE PROPOSALS, EXPLAINED TO THIEU DANGERS OF SENDING TROOPS DEEP INTO CAMBODIA IN KRATIE AND KAMPONG CHAM AREA.

7 WE POINTED OUT THE LIMITS OF THE PRESENT CAMBODIAN OPERATIONS WHOSE OBJECTIVES WERE AGREED IN ORIGINAL PLAN. WE SAID IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO CAMOUFLAGE US HELP BEYOND LIMITS OF 35 KILOMETERS WHICH PRESIDENT HAS SET. WE SAID WE WERE ALWAYS AWARE OF MILITARY WEAKNESS OF CAMBODIAN GOVT AND DANGER IT MIGHT FALL, AND HAD DONE WHAT WE COULD TO HELP WITH TROOPS AND SMALL ARMS.

8. THIEU PROMISED HE WOULD TAKE NO ACTION IN ADVANCE OF CONSULTATION WITH US, BUT REPEATEDLY ASKED WHAT CAN BE DONE TO HELP CAMBODIAN GOVT HOLD PHNOM PENH BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE. WE PROMISED RELAY HIS VIEWS TO WASHINGTON FOR URGENT CONSIDERATION.

9. JUST BEFORE WE LEFT HE CALLED GENERAL VIEN AND THEN TOLD US THAT THEY CANNOT SEND TROOPS TO KRATIE, BUT ARE STILL STUDYING EXTRACTION POSSIBILITIES; THAT NOTHING HAS BEEN HEARD FROM FANK TROOPS IN MONDULKIRI AREA FOR TWO DAYS; AND THAT POSSIBILITY OF ARTILLERY SUPPORT FOR TAKEO NOW UNDER CONSIDERATION.

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